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Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
Sixty-seventh session

Summary record of the 1500th meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 3 July 2017, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Leinarte

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Opening of the session

1. **The Chair** declared open the sixty-seventh session of the Committee.

Statement by the representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

2. **Mr. Nowosad** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)) said that the High-level Working Group on the Health and Human Rights of Women, Children and Adolescents had been created to generate high-level political dialogue for the advancement of the health and human rights agenda at the national and international levels, building on the Sustainable Development Goals and the Secretary-General's Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health. On 22 May 2017, during the seventieth World Health Assembly, the High-level Working Group had issued a landmark report, entitled "Leading the realization of human rights to health and through health", which called on States to uphold the right to health in national law, establish a rights-based approach to health financing and universal health coverage, end violence and discrimination against women, including harmful practices and intersecting forms of discrimination, and challenge social, gender and cultural norms that prevented human rights and gender equality from being realized. The report concluded that the most significant gap between expectations and achievement in the health and human rights of women, children and adolescents was caused by a lack of adequate leadership. The High Commissioner for Human Rights had resolved to address that gap by working closely with the World Health Organization (WHO) on the implementation of the recommendations of the report.

3. In drafting the report, the High-level Working Group had greatly benefited from the jurisprudence of the treaty bodies, including that of the Committee, which would continue to be a driving force in holding States accountable for the advancement of women's and girls' rights to health and the realization of human rights through health. In that regard, cooperation between OHCHR and the Committee should be strengthened to use the momentum created by the work of the High-level Working Group on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to counter attacks on women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health rights and gender equality.

4. On 13 June 2017, the Human Rights Council had held its annual full-day discussion on the human rights of women. The discussion involved two panels, one entitled "Accelerating efforts to eliminate violence against women: engaging men and boys in preventing and responding to violence against women and girls", and the other, "Women's rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: health and gender equality". The panel discussion on the 2030 Agenda addressed the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal No. 3, on ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages, and Sustainable Development Goal No. 5, on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. The panel on accelerating efforts to eliminate violence against women had looked at ways of engaging men and boys as partners and agents of change in order to challenge discriminatory stereotypes and social norms and eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls. Gender-based violence against women remained one of the most pervasive forms of human rights abuses and was therefore one of the main ways used to perpetuate the subordinate position of women in relation to men and the stereotyping of women's roles.

5. In her annual presentation to the Human Rights Council on 12 June 2017, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, Ms. Dubravka Šimonović, had highlighted the importance of protection orders and called for comprehensive approaches to the process of integrating services and shelters to prevent violence against women and referred to the Committee's important jurisprudence concerning gender-based violence.

6. At the opening of the thirty-fifth session of the Council on 6 June 2017, the High Commissioner had expressed his concern about the poor reporting record of many States parties to international human rights treaties. The High Commissioner had reminded States

that reporting obligations were not optional and had issued a list of 74 States whose reports under one or more treaties had been overdue for a decade or longer. However, he had also highlighted the fact that 33 States were fully up-to-date with their reporting obligations. The High Commissioner had stressed that, while reporting procedures did not always result in real progress, they helped to identify gaps and measures to overcome them.

7. At the twenty-ninth annual meeting of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies, the Chairs had: met with representatives of States parties, United Nations entities and agencies, national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations to exchange views on ways to further enhance the effective functioning of the treaty body system; taken note of the report of the Secretary-General on the status of the treaty body system (A/71/118), including the request to the General Assembly concerning the meeting time allocated to treaty bodies and the resources that they needed; resolved to continue working towards aligning their working methods in response to General Assembly resolution 68/268; reviewed States parties' compliance with their reporting obligations; expressed their support for an aligned approach to follow-up to concluding observations, decisions and Views; and discussed a common approach by the treaty bodies to working with national human rights institutions, among other things.

8. OHCHR commended the Committee for the way in which it had generated momentum to promote the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and adopted a best practice for linking the realization of human rights to the 2030 Agenda. Over the previous two years, the Committee had made substantial contributions to the high-level political forum on sustainable development and had used its expertise to shape the methodology used for Sustainable Development Goal indicator 5.1.1. It had also used its lists of issues to collect data for that indicator. With the support of OHCHR and UN-Women, the Committee would revise its reporting guidelines to establish a link between the submission of reports under the Convention and the collection of data used to measure relevant Sustainable Development Goal targets. The Office also welcomed the prospect of the adoption of a new general recommendation on gender-based violence against women to update the Committee's landmark general recommendation No. 19 (1992) on the same topic.

9. **Ms. Hayashi**, noting that some members of the Committee had contributed to the report issued by the High-level Working Group, said that she commended those members' efforts to highlight the gender perspective in that report. However, it should be pointed out that the list of acronyms, abbreviations and definitions on page 4 of the report referred to the Committee on the Rights of the Child but not to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work (CEDAW/C/67/1)

10. *The agenda was adopted.*

Report of the Chair on activities undertaken between the sixty-sixth and sixty-seventh sessions of the Committee

11. **The Chair** said that, since the previous session, the number of States parties that had ratified or acceded to the Convention had remained at 189. The number of States parties that had accepted the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention concerning the Committee's meeting time had remained at 71. In accordance with the provisions of the Convention, a total of 126 States parties were required to accept the amendment in order to bring it into force. She was pleased to note that Sao Tome and Principe had ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on 23 March 2017, bringing the total number of States parties to the Optional Protocol to 109. Since the start of the previous session, one State party had submitted its initial report and eight States parties had submitted their periodic reports.

12. On 13 March 2017, she had participated in the opening of the sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women, where, in her capacity as the Chair of the Committee, she had delivered a statement. On 17 March 2017, she, Ms. Acar and other United Nations and regional human rights experts, including the Special Rapporteur on

violence against women, had met with the Secretary-General to discuss ways of enhancing coordination between United Nations and regional mechanisms working in the area of women's human rights to prevent those rights from being eroded. On 15 March 2017, she had met with the Deputy Executive Director of UN-Women to discuss ways of enhancing cooperation between the Committee and UN-Women.

13. During the first week of the most recent session of the Commission on the Status of Women, she had participated in a panel discussion on the international legal framework on violence against women. In her statement, she had referred to the Committee's work on a general recommendation on gender-based violence against women that would serve to update general recommendation No. 19 on the topic. During the session, she had also participated in the high-level interactive dialogue on accelerating the implementation of the commitments made in the conclusions relating to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. On 15 March 2017, at a consultation on operationalizing enhanced collaboration between the Committee and regional mechanisms for the protection of women's rights, organized by OHCHR, she had spoken about the need for enhanced cooperation between the Committee and regional mechanisms for the protection of women's rights. She had also given a presentation on the Committee's general recommendation No. 34 on the rights of rural women at a panel discussion entitled "Empowering rural and indigenous women to achieve food security and nutrition".

14. On 8 June, she had delivered a presentation at the University of Cambridge entitled "Implementation of women's rights: in between de facto and de jure", in which she had provided an overview of the Convention and its implementation. She had also given a radio interview to the Women's Parliamentary Radio in London on the role of the Committee in achieving women's rights around the world. On 16 June, she had made a presentation via Skype to the Lithuanian parliament on international standards on violence against women and had given an overview of the draft general recommendation on gender-based violence against women. She had recently returned from the twenty-ninth annual meeting of the Chairs of human rights treaty bodies in New York.

15. **Ms. Schulz** said that the Committee should explore the possibility of requesting States parties at the next meeting of States parties to revisit their decision to amend article 20 (1) of the Convention, as contained in the report of the States parties adopted in 1995 (CEDAW/SP/1995/2, annex), with a view to accelerating the process. As the Committee had been allowed on a regular basis to have sessions of more than two weeks, a new decision on the entry into force of the amendment might be taken to bring the Convention into line with the Committee's practice and resolve the issue once and for all.

16. **Ms. Hayashi** said that, during the dialogues with the States parties, the Chair or the country rapporteurs should urge States parties that had not yet ratified the amendment to do so as soon as possible.

17. **Ms. Gabr** said that she had been appointed to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Women's Advisory Council, which was composed of nine members, with representatives from each OIC geographical group. The Council was tasked with helping the Ministerial Conference on the Role of Women in the Development of Member States to tackle women's human rights issues.

18. **Ms. Haidar** said that, in March 2017, she had attended a side event on assessing the evolution, role and impact of the Human Rights Council since the days of the Commission on Human Rights, presented the Committee's draft general recommendation on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction and climate change at a meeting organized by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation on the occasion of International Women's Day and attended a workshop organized by OHCHR in conjunction with the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights and the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions on the interaction between the treaty bodies and national human rights institutions. The workshop had underlined the need for the Committee to improve dialogue and cooperation with national human rights institutions, particularly as, unlike other treaty bodies, the Committee engaged with such institutions only on an informal, ad hoc basis.

19. In late March, she had taken part in an expert workshop on the "Faith for Rights" initiative, organized by OHCHR in Beirut, which had culminated in the adoption of the Beirut Declaration on Faith for Rights and 18 related commitments. At the end of April 2017, she had participated in a distance learning initiative on human rights, with a special focus on women's rights, under the auspices of the Tahdir (Preparation) for Syrians web platform training programme. She had also attended an expert group meeting on strategies to achieve gender equality and to empower women and girls through the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, convened by UN-Women and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in preparation for the high-level political forum on sustainable development. Lastly, she had taken part in a distance learning initiative run by the Lebanese American University on gender and human rights, which had focused on the concluding observations adopted by the Committee in respect of countries in the Middle East and the ways in which civil society could help give effect to the Committee's recommendations.

20. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** said that, in April 2017, she had attended a capacity-building seminar on reporting to the treaty bodies devoted to Mexico, Central America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, which had taken place in Panama. The Committee's practices had been used as a model in a number of the exercises undertaken during the seminar.

21. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** said that, in March 2017, she had given a series of talks and workshops on human rights mechanisms, with a special focus on the work of the Committee, to students and staff at the Human Rights Centre of the University of Minnesota. In Israel, she had participated in a round table held in anticipation of the country's universal periodic review, where she had explained the work of the treaty bodies in general and that of the Committee in particular.

22. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that, in June 2017, she had provided training to parliamentarians in Uganda over a three-day period at the request of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. On that occasion, she had presented a paper on the role of parliaments in reporting to the Committee, on the Convention and its Optional Protocol and a number of the Committee's general recommendations and on its concluding observations in respect of Uganda. She had seized the opportunity to remind the State party of the need to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

23. She had also travelled to Basel to give a talk to the Mission 21 community of churches and organizations on the Committee's perspectives on women and peace and security and to discuss the impact of religion on women's rights. In that connection, she had provided an overview of the Committee's general recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations (CEDAW/C/GC/30) and underscored the need for the group to make use of it in its work.

24. **Ms. Schulz** said that, in April 2017, she had taken part in a training programme organized by the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva for French-speaking diplomats dealing with women's human rights issues at the Human Rights Council. She had delivered a presentation on the international framework for the protection of women's rights and on the mechanisms for enforcing those rights. In May 2017, she had met with the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice to discuss its work in view of the imminent departure and replacement of four of its members and the possibility of further collaboration with the Committee. The same month, she had attended a meeting organized by the International Service for Human Rights on the treaty body strengthening process, which had proved to be most productive.

25. In June 2017, she had represented the Committee at a meeting of the Academic Platform on the 2020 Treaty Body Review of the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights on the initiatives being undertaken by the United Nations on health and human rights and their linkages with the Sustainable Development Goals. She had also attended a meeting organized by the Observatory on the Universality of Rights, which had published a report on setbacks in the human rights sphere, entitled "Rights at risk: Observatory on the Universality of Rights trends report 2017".

26. **Ms. Song** said that, in June 2017, she had been invited to speak at a China-European Union legal aid policy dialogue in Beijing. On that occasion, she had provided an overview of the Committee's general recommendation No. 33 on women's access to justice (CEDAW/C/GC/33) to representatives of European Union member States, the Ministry of Justice of China, legal aid institutions and legal aid providers from different provinces of the country. She had also seized the opportunity to raise awareness of the Convention and its Optional Protocol.

27. **Ms. Rana** said that, in May 2017, she had been invited by OHCHR to assist in delivering a capacity-building programme to 14 countries from South Asia and the Pacific in Sri Lanka. On that occasion, she had highlighted the importance of timely reporting to the treaty bodies. Similarly, in June 2017, she had been invited by the Embassy of Norway in Myanmar to conduct workshops with different stakeholders on the issue of women and peace and security. She had also provided training to the media, civil society and female parliamentarians on the Convention, general recommendation No. 30 and Security Council resolutions on women and peace and security. The same month, she had conducted a workshop on costing and budgeting for the national action plan of Nepal to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security.

28. **Ms. Jahan** said that, in May 2017, she had attended a seminar as part of the 2017 Global South Women's Forum on Sustainable Development in Kigali, Rwanda, organized by the International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific. The seminar had focused on the need to mainstream gender equality in human rights instruments and in the Sustainable Development Goals and to build strong partnerships between local and global actors and between NGOs from developing and developed countries to ensure the goals' effective implementation. She had also sat on a panel to discuss female empowerment and had drawn attention to the input provided by the Committee into the indicators for Sustainable Development Goal 5 and the Committee's contribution to the high-level political forum.

29. **Ms. Acosta Vargas** said that, in April 2017, in the city of Tarapoto, she had sat on a panel to discuss justice and the defence of the rights of Amazonian and Andean women. The discussions had centred on access to justice for Latin American women whose human rights were systematically violated by transnational companies and on the failure of States to penalize them and to provide reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence. After the main event, she had taken part in a dialogue with female defence lawyers aimed at raising their awareness of the Optional Protocol to the Convention and general recommendation No. 33. In June 2017, she had engaged in a dialogue with participants of the OHCHR Indigenous Fellowship Programme on the Convention.

30. **Ms. Chalal** said that, in Algeria, she had worked with the recently established High Council for Human Rights and the Ministry of Education to design a guide on the Convention for use in schools.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

31. **Ms. Schulz**, introducing the report of the Chair of the pre-sessional working group for the sixty-seventh session, said that the working group had met from 21 to 25 November 2016 in Geneva to prepare lists of issues and questions concerning the periodic reports of Barbados, Costa Rica, Italy, Montenegro, the Niger, Nigeria and Thailand. The working group had also prepared a list of issues prior to reporting, under its optional simplified reporting procedure, on Luxembourg, whose report was due to be considered at the sixty-ninth session. In preparing the lists, the working group had paid particular attention to States parties' follow-up to its concluding observations on their previous reports. The group had received written and oral information from entities and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, from NGOs and from national human rights institutions. The finalized lists of issues and questions had been transmitted to the States parties concerned.

Follow-up to the consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention

32. **Ms. Gbedemah** (Rapporteur on follow-up), briefing the Committee on the status of follow-up reports received from States parties, said that, during the sixty-sixth session, she, along with Ms. Nadaraia, had met with representatives of the Central African Republic and the Republic of the Congo, whose responses had been positive. At the end of the session, follow-up letters outlining the outcome of assessments of follow-up reports had been sent to Andorra, Cameroon, Dominican Republic, Georgia, Iraq, Jamaica, Lithuania, Peru and Seychelles. First reminders about overdue follow-up reports had been sent to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brunei Darussalam, Ghana, Guinea and Poland. A second reminder had been sent to Sierra Leone. The Committee had received follow-up reports from Belgium on time, China with a two-month delay, Denmark and Ecuador on time, Egypt with a 16-month delay, Kazakhstan with a nine-month delay, Oman with a 25-month delay and Solomon Islands and Swaziland with a three-month delay.

33. She had invited the country rapporteurs for Belgium and Oman to assist in the assessment of the follow-up reports and called for volunteers to assist in the assessment of the follow-up reports sent by China, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, Kazakhstan, Solomon Islands and Swaziland. During the current session, first reminders should be issued to Azerbaijan, Eritrea, Gabon, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives and Tuvalu. Second reminders should be sent to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brunei Darussalam, Ghana, Guinea, India, Mauritania and Poland. In addition, meetings should be scheduled with representatives of Benin, Cabo Verde, the Central African Republic, Comoros, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Sierra Leone.

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.